

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:45 a.m. in the Amphitheater at Arlington National Cemetery. In his remarks, he referred to Manuel Tanguma, Jr., commander, Catholic War Veterans of the U.S.A.; Maj. Gen. Robert R. Ivany, USA, commander, U.S. Army Military District of Washington; John C. Metzler, Jr., Superintendent, Arlington Na-

tional Cemetery; Hugh Maddy, Chief of Chaplains, Department of Veterans Affairs; Lee Thornton, master of ceremonies; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. A portion of these remarks could not be verified because the tape was incomplete. H.R. 4110, the Veterans Programs Enhancement Act of 1998, approved November 11, was assigned Public Law No. 105-368.

Statement on Funding for Military Readiness

November 11, 1998

Today, as part of the Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, 1999, I am releasing \$1.1 billion in military readiness funding that will enhance our Armed Forces' ability to maintain high standards of readiness throughout the coming year.

I consider military readiness—ensuring that our forces are always prepared to carry out their assigned mission in peace and in war—to be among America's highest priorities.

On September 15 I met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Unified Commanders in Chief, and they advised that, while our current state of readiness is sound, there are real concerns about the future. While our forces are now capable of meeting the security needs of the Nation, the chiefs raised several concerns about military readiness, especially regarding the future readiness of follow-on troops who would be deployed in a sustained conflict.

In response, I made a commitment to add resources to the current year's budget that will address emerging readiness concerns by reducing the backlog of equipment awaiting maintenance, buying additional spare parts for Air Force and Navy aircraft, and improving our recruiting efforts. In addition, I have ordered a thorough and complete readiness review, involv-

ing the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, and the Office of Management and Budget, as part of my administration's budget review process for fiscal year 2000.

The review process for fiscal year 2000 is already underway, and I anticipate a series of budget and policy proposals that will continue our effort to ensure that U.S. forces remain ready to meet the security needs of the Nation. Our challenge is to strike a balance between providing sufficient resources for military readiness while maintaining fiscal discipline and appropriate funding levels for other investments necessary to sustain our economy.

I look forward to working with the next Congress to ensure a viable defense budget that continues to guarantee that our forces are prepared, while investing wisely in modernization and supporting the overall policy goals of my administration. And I am pleased that this action today will address the most immediate readiness needs of the U.S. military.

NOTE: H.R. 4328, the Omnibus Consolidated and Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act, 1999, approved October 21, was assigned Public Law No. 105-277.

Statement on Signing the Veterans Programs Enhancement Act of 1998

November 11, 1998

Today I am pleased to sign into law H.R. 4110, the "Veterans Programs Enhancement Act

of 1998." It is particularly appropriate on this Veterans Day to express the Nation's continued